

Executive Registry

79-4376/1

19 JUL 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
THROUGH: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence  
FROM: Herbert E. Hetu  
Director of Public Affairs  
SUBJECT: Publication of Unclassified Material  
REFERENCE: Your 2 July 1979 memo to me and [redacted]  
same subject

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1. Action Requested: None. This responds to the reference in which you asked for background on the Agency's program to distribute unclassified documents.

2. Background: The Agency began to disseminate unclassified material under its own name in 1972, and the amount of dissemination has been on the increase since. While giving the program significant impetus, your policies nevertheless are only an extension of the practice started at that time. The program evolved as follows.

a. During the period 1960-1970, CIA distributed biographic reference aids to the academic community through the Department of State. State would remove all attribution to CIA before distributing, which suggests the attitude of the times. In 1970, State terminated this activity altogether, citing personnel cuts as the reason (TAB A).

b. An Agency decision to undertake open dissemination of unclassified materials was made two years later (1972) as one way of "consciously trying to increase public understanding of the role of intelligence." The Director of Central Reference Service (now OCR), in a memo of 31 January 1972 (TAB B), attributed the desire to do this to "Agency management," and noted that the proposal had been cleared with the Assistant to the DCI [redacted] the Legislative Counsel and the General Counsel.

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EXECUTIVE REGISTRY

FILE # 8-212

2 July 1979

c. While those documents released in 1972 and 1973 consisted entirely of economic indicators and political compilations, 1974 saw the beginning of dissemination of research reports covering such substantive topics as China, world oil refineries, and the Soviet economy. In 1975 the release of the report "Soviet Long-Range Energy Forecasts" received headlines and embroiled the Agency in a controversy over its forecasts. In 1976 the release of "A Dollar Cost Comparison of Soviet and US Defense Activities in 1965-1975" had a similar result.

d. The Documents Expediting Project (DOCEX) of the Library of Congress provided the first mechanism for formal systematic distribution in 1972. The Office of Economic Research joined it late in the same year. Twenty-eight documents were released in 1972. The program has grown to a point where about 150 documents have been released in each of the last two years. As you know, continued emphasis has been placed on this program and has resulted in a contract with the National Technical Information Service (Department of Commerce) for more accessible and more economical distribution of our documents to the public. The study at TAB C will refresh your memory on the details leading to that contract, should you wish to review it.

3. Staff Position: A copy of this memorandum has been sent to

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4. Recommendation: None; for information only.

Herbert E. Hetu

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